

# THE MORNING NEWS

Your Source for local news in English

Caya G.F. Betico Croes 111 T. 588-9517 F. 5889518.

## Changes in Carnival grand parade routes as officials anticipate record participation

On Wednesday, January 23, Tecla Kelly Hernandez, the president of the Stichting Arubaanse Carnaval, or SAC, the foundation that administrates carnival events, joined Inspectors Muller and Daly of the traffic police to announced changes to the final grand parades conducted in Oranjestad and San Nicolas.

The changes were made to accommodate the expected overwhelming participation and number of spectators attending these final events of Aruba's Diamond Jubilee Carnival. This special anniversary edition has generated so much interest and enthusiasm, the parade routes have been lengthened to allow for the beginning of the parade to see be going on by the time the final groups begin their march through the cities' streets. It is anticipated the entire parade will exceed the existing routes, judging from the response to the 55th anniversary carnival. This year, it is expected it will be even longer.

In Oranjestad, the route will basically stay the same, but participants and floats will congregate on the Avenida Milio Croes before the officially entering the parade at the intersection in front of the Hagemeyer store.

It will travel the length of the Avenida Milio Croes, turn towards the shorefront at the Vondellan, and after traversing the Vonderllan, turn onto L.G. Smith Boulevard at the Talk of the Town Resort. Instead of concluding at the DOW building and Valero station at the western end of Oranjestad, the official route will continue to the rotunda next to the Wendy's at the Belgiestraat, where it will finish.

In San Nicolas, rather than commencing from the Joe Laveist Ballpark, the parade will start at the Elmar building on Pastoor Hendrickstraat. It will travel directly to the San Nicolas main street, Bernardstraat, crossing to Zeewijk and passing behind the police and fire departments reaching the new rotunda and continuing the normal route which will travel to the end of the street, head north for Bernardstraat, and there, turn east towards the new rotunda at the base Lago Heights by bearing left where it forks. The parade will then turn north to Pastoor Hendrickstraat, where it will head west to the Seroe Preto road. If the last group has not yet joined the parade, it will continue on the road to Seroe Preto until all groups are dancing through the streets.

The process of obtaining a spot to place a trailer will entail only the principal sections of the parade grounds, and will not include the extended areas on L.G. Smith Boulevard past the Valero station nor the Seroe Preto Road. Spectators will be able to place chairs, shade umbrellas and coolers along these extended areas.

The final grand parades will be conducted in San Nicolas



and Oranjestad on Saturday and Sunday, March first and second, beginning at 11:00 AM.

## Bitterly cold US digs out of northeast snow

NEW YORK (AFP) - Millions of American commuters braved miserable conditions across the East coast Wednesday after a fierce storm dumped almost a foot of snow from the Mid-Atlantic to New England.

Federal government stumbled and slipped back to work as bitter wind chills kept temperatures 10 to 25 degrees below average with hundreds of flights canceled and roads still icy.

Wednesday saw little of the snow that had blanketed the region overnight, but fierce winds and biting temperatures prolonged the suffering, and many schools and offices remained shut.

In New York, the mercury would not rise beyond 14 Fahrenheit (-10 Celsius) but bone-chilling gusts made it feel as low as -13 Fahrenheit, the National Weather Service said.

Schools in the city were open and most subway lines

ran smoothly but new mayor Bill de Blasio was roasted in the press for bungling the second winter storm of his less than four-week administration.

When the 10 inches of snow began falling earlier than expected Tuesday, residents complained that road crews were too slow to mobilize, causing a string of accidents and traffic gridlock.

"I can't believe de Blasio could do this. He is putting everyone in danger," Barbara Tamerin, 70, was quoted as telling The New York Post on the well-heeled Upper East Side.

"What is he thinking? I can barely get around -- and I'm on snowshoes!"

For others Central Park was a joyful winter wonderland.

Tatia, a baby-sitter, was taking her two charges sledging.

Continued on pg 6

## Long time visitors share 100 years of marriage and visiting Aruba between them



The Lewis' and Woodruffs with friends Linda Garcia and Marilyn Hoek

One thing that Aruba's frequent, dedicated patrons know is how the island connects people in so many, and sometimes surprising, ways. For two couples who stay annually at the Renaissance Beach Suites, and were recently honored by the Aruba Tourism Authority, it kindled friendships for neighbors who were barely aware of each other prior to sharing a beach on Aruba. (see story on pg 2)



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## Long time visitors share 100 years of marriage and visiting Aruba between them



With their good friend Rosie Franke



With Linda Garcia of the Renaissance

ORANJESTAD -- One thing that Aruba's frequent, dedicated patrons know is how the island connects people in so many, and sometimes surprising, ways. For two couples who stay annually at the Renaissance Beach Suites, and were recently honored by the Aruba Tourism Authority, it kindled friendships for neighbors who were barely aware of each other prior to sharing a beach on Aruba.

Ken and Gail Lewis of Freeport, Long Island celebrated their golden wedding anniversary on Aruba on last week, with a gala catered affair at the Renaissance Con-

vention Center in Oranjestad with 22 family members and friends. They have been escaping winter to Aruba for twenty years now, progressing from owning only one week to eight, for a blessed two months in the sun on the island they love best.

Celebrating with them was another couple from Bethpage, Long Island, Bruce and Harriett Woodruff, who will soon coming up on their 50th wedding anniversary in May. The two couples were honored by the ATA on Wednesday morning, being named "Ambassadors of Goodwill" by ATA Representative

Ernest Giel.

Together they received flag pins and certificates from the Aruban Government. Renaissance Resort Concierge Linda Garcia further demonstrated the resort's appreciation for their loyal patronage by presenting them with bottles of champagne and vouchers for dinners at the Beach Suites or Aquarius restaurant.

The Lewis' first came to Aruba after being offered a timeshare at the Renaissance from an agency they used in the U.S., and after trying several other islands in the region, Aruba became their preference for their annual winter getaway. "You have everything here," states Ken. "No place we have been to can compare, so we don't bother going anywhere else, anymore."

Robert Franke, a close neighbor of Ken's, shared his passion for being a volunteer fireman. He and his wife, Rosie, had also discovered the Renaissance, just coincidentally, and the two couples became close friends during their days sharing the beach and pool.

Bob, it turns out, was an




Lewis' 50th wedding anniversary party

insurance broker, as was Bruce Woodruff, so when they bumped into each other on the streets of Oranjestad, there was recognition, and their friendship blossomed. Bruce and his wife joined their cozy group at the Renaissance, and over their many years vacationing together, their casual, neighborly relationships developed into a strong bond of friendship, sharing many of life's milestones together, on Aruba and back in the U.S.

It was here that Ken's daughter, Kim and her husband, Richard Koos, were

married on the Renaissance Beach in 2003, with all their good friends and extended Aruban family attending. Sadly, they lost Robert in 2011, but Rosie still joins the group every year for their annual winter sojourn. "Robert and Rosie were definitely the glue that kept us all together," commented Bruce, "he is missed, but we are still thrilled to return each year to share this time with Rosie, and all the wonderful experiences we always have together while here."

By Rosalie Klein



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## Submission of labor data and registration of personnel for 2012-2013

ORANJESTAD -- As of April 1st, 2013, the labor law (AV 2013) became effective. In conformity with article 28 and 30 of AV 2013, employers are required to submit a copy of their labor list to the Department of Labor. Upon the request of the Director of the Department of Labor, the employer must also submit a registry of their personnel.

In September 2013, the Director of DAO requested all businesses via the local press to submit, before November 30, 2013, both their labor list as well as the registry of all personnel. However, up to today only 60% of all active businesses complied with this request.

The Director of DAO is informing here that the requested lists must be submitted no later than February 14th, 2014. After this date the DAO will not allow for any further dispensation.

On the labor list, mention must be made of all functions within the business, the number of employees for each function, the working hours, job schedule and rest hours. For every branch a separate list must be filled out and submitted.

The personnel registry must contain all information of the personnel. You must also indicate your personnel needs if any for the next cal-

endar year. For the 2012-2013 list of personnel the employer must fill out a form with all information of each personnel. There must also be an indication of which employee does a rotation between branches.

A model of the labor sheet and the personnel registry are available online at [www.overheid.aw](http://www.overheid.aw) or [www.gobierno.aw](http://www.gobierno.aw). Copies are obtainable at the offices of DAO in Oranjestad and San Nicolaas or request these by email at: [kidra.sprok@aruba.gov.aw](mailto:kidra.sprok@aruba.gov.aw) or [arbeidsmarktonderzoek@hotmail.com](mailto:arbeidsmarktonderzoek@hotmail.com).

After the Department of Labor has reviewed the lists, the company will receive a copy with a stamp from DAO as proof that the list was received and controlled. In the event the list must be corrected or be adapted, the DAO will contact the person in charge at the company. Both forms must be submitted to the offices of DAO on the L.G. Smith Blvd 134 or in San Nicolaas behind the Arubus station.

Hours of operation are Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 12:00 noon and from 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

For more information please contact the Bureau for Labor Research at DAO at Tel.583-7720.

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## Aruba Ray's Comedy show-where those in the know come to laugh!



All the crew with Comedy Cellar owner Noam Dworman and his wife Juanita

ORANJESTAD -- What began as a brief island escape for noted New York comedian Ray Ellin, became a love affair with a destination for which he felt a real connection. The host of the shows "Worth The Wait," and "LateNet with Ray Ellin" began returning on a monthly basis, and soon looked to bringing his hip New York style of stand-up to the island, accompanied by some of his equally popular comedic friends, for "Aruba Ray's Comedy Show."

His latest venture is providing hearty laughs for adult audiences since mid-January until the final show, Tuesday, January 29. The frightful weather back home proved to be a bonanza for those attending opening night of his new headliners for the second week of the run. The first week, the cabaret theater in the Westin resort featured the hilarious observances of Brian Scott Mcfaddin, a veteran to the show, and Ted Alexandro, who were to return to New York as new headliners, Chuck Nice, another Aruba veteran, and newcomer Lenny Marcus, took over the stage.

However, Brian and Ted have found they are stranded by cancelled flights, (they have to admit, not a bad place to be stranded!!) and so audiences for the second week's premiere show were treated to an extra-long night of hilarity, with five performers instead of three, giving it their all.

Unfortunately, it looks like Brian will return today, but those who enjoy a great show can probably catch Ted for one more night, along with Ray and his extremely funny friends, Chuck and Lenny.

THE MORNING NEWS caught Chuck's act when Ray first appeared on Aruba, but he returns with fresh material, as well as his impromptu interaction with the audience.

For eight years, Chuck Nice was the comedy relief on the New York airwaves for the "Radio Chick Show." He hosted his own television show on HGTV "Home Strange Home," while simultaneously appearing regularly on NBC's "Today Show." He appears regularly on Vh-1's "Best Week Ever," WE TV's "Cinematherapy," CBS' "Early Show," "The Mike & Juliet Show," and Tru TV's "World's Dumbest Criminals," which is just a fraction of his resume.

Lenny Marcus proved to be a very self-aware, self-effacing humorist, demonstrating that behind his mild-mannered demeanor is a wicked wit. He is a veteran of "Late Night with David Letterman," "Live at Gotham," on Comedy Central, "Friday Nite" and "Comedy Showcase with Louis Anderson" on NBC as well as several very-well respected comedy festivals. His humorous writings have appeared in Us, Life and Style Magazines.

Tickets for the shows can be purchased at the Westin guest services desk for \$34 per ticket, which includes a \$40 slot play coupon and raffle ticket for valuable prizes.

Full bar is available without a minimum or cover charge, during the show and there are also dinner packages available. Seating is on a first come, first served basis. Doors open at 8:00 PM and the show starts at 9:00 PM. For more information call the Westin Resort and Casino-297-586-4466.

If anything can be a testament to the professionalism and enjoyment of this show, it was the surprise appearance of the owner of the Comedy Cellar in Greenwich Village, New York, Noam Dworman, who took over the famous nightclub founded by his father, well-known musician, Manny. Comedy Cellar is considered one of the most important such venues in the world, and has hosted the likes of Robin Williams and Jerry Seinfeld. Tucked in a corner, Noam and his wife enjoyed the show along with the rest of audience, with two big thumbs up for the comedians performing on Aruba, who are all veterans of his famous comedy club. They considered it the greatest compliment that he took time out from his vacation to come and enjoy their show.

By Rosalie Klein

### Carnaval Schedule

**Thu. Jan 23 - 7 p.m. - Club Caiquetio :**  
School Carnival Queen Election 2014

**Fri. Jan 24 7:00 p.m. Tumberto 2014 @ Aruba Entertainment Center**

**Sun. Jan 26 1:00 p.m.**  
Balloon Parade in San Nicolas



### Lunch Buffet

Saturday - Sunday  
12:00 - 3 p.m.

### Dinner

Monday - Sunday  
6:00 - 11:00 p.m

Palm Beach Center - Palm Beach Aruba - Tel: 5860944

## Ministers of Education meet Vision and experience exchanges are important between Aruba and Curacao



L to R: Ministers of Education Curacao and Aruba; Min. Irene Dick and Min. Winklaar Hoooyboer

ORANJESTAD -- During her recent visit to Curacao, Aruba Minister of Education, Michelle Winklaar-Hoooyboer visited her Curacao colleague, Minister Irene Dick. With only two weeks in this new watch, the Minister was able to discuss a number of topics on education.

Minister Irene Dick brings an expertise of over 40 years to Education. She was in charge of different functions related to Education in Curacao. The primary theme during their conversation was how the two islands, so close to each other, with the same language and a similar context, can work together on different areas of education.

According to Mikchelle Winklaar-Hoooyboer, "...we must discover how we can

come together as islands for our students to benefit from this." Curacao, reportedly, is more advanced in certain areas of Education compared to Aruba, while in other areas Aruba is the front runner. Hence, there is sufficient reason to sit together and exchange ideas and experiences that can benefit the two islands. The two dignitaries agreed that they will maintain open communication with each other so as to continue their discussions.

Annually, a large number of students choose to come to Aruba to continue their education, either in the hospitality sector at EPI or the University of Aruba. On the other hand, likewise a large number of Aruban students choose to go to Curacao to continue their education. Hence, it is vital that both islands support the ideas and agreements of cooperation to benefit our students and education in general.

"Before we begin signing agreements far from home, I am convinced that right here close to home we can better serve each other," according to the Aruban Minister. She emphasized that they will continue to explore all forms of cooperation. For example, if we purchase and produce school material together, we must, in view of our large volume achieve better pricing.



## The whole family is invited! Paseo Herencia celebrates 'Dia di Betico'



PALM BEACH-- This Saturday January 25th at 7 p.m. Paseo Herencia will be celebrating 'Betico Day' with the popular group 'Grupo di Betico' who will delight all present with a variety of their catchy local tunes.

Folkloric dance group 'Youth in Action' will also be presenting different dances to the public.

And not forgetting to mention the different stores in the Paseo Herencia Mall offering special discount on this national holiday such as Totto who will have a 15% discount, free topping at Haagen Dazs and when purchasing 3 scoops of ice-cream the 4th will be completely free!

For those with a sweet tooth special local sweets and fresh coconut water will also be sold, and the spectacular water show on the rhythms of songs by Aruba's 'Father of Culture' Padu cannot be left out.

If you feel like spending a great moment with the family in a family ambience Paseo Herencia is the place to spend Aruba's national Holiday: "Dia di Betico."

Everyone is invited to visit

the Paseo Herencia where there is something for everyone!

## GKMB to treat stagnant water to ward off mosquitos



ORANJESTAD -- Gele Koorts Muskiet Bestrijding (Yellow Fever Mosquito Eradication) is about to initiate a spraying action on all stagnant water around the island. After every rainfall water collects at different sites and remain stagnant for many weeks. These stagnant water collections only become breeding grounds for mosquitos.

During the week a pickup with a mounted power sprayer containing a completely natural solution called "Vectobac" will pass at different barrios around the is-

land and spray these stagnant waters. This spraying action will eradicate the Psorophora mosquitos which do not transmit contagious diseases, but can become a nuisance to our community. The Aedes Aegypti mosquito can also be present in these stagnant waters. This type of mosquito is known for transmitting the Dengue disease.

The spraying of the natural substance being used is totally harmless to the community, hence, there is no need to close windows and doors during the spraying. The stagnant waters are mostly found in the Savaneta/Pos Chiquito areas, as well as in Noord and at other areas around the island.

For more information you can contact the GKMB department at Tel. 585-3325 or the Department of Public Health at 522-4200.

*Paseo Herencia*  
"nos orguyo... Aruba's pride"



## CELEBRACION DI DIA DI BETICO

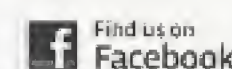
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## Minister of Public Health visited by Aruba Boxing Commission




ORANJESTAD -- Just recently the Minister of Public Health received a visit from the Aruba Boxing Commission. The boxing sport has experienced many innovations. In the past years this sport lost a great deal of interest locally. However, in recent times it is gaining popularity either as a sport to be practiced or by boxing fans.

The Aruba Boxing Commission exists since 1947 and are completely regulated. They represent boxing on

Aruba.

They have many new ideas regarding the regulation of professional boxing on Aruba. They discussed different ideas and some of their goals with the Minister. They would like to find a solution for the MMA sport. Their hope is that the government would lend more support to this sport along with the Commission. They would to see more persons practicing this sport on a professional level and even going international.





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## Bitterly cold US...

Cont. from pg 1

"I'm gonna take them up the hill and I'm gonna sit them down...and I'll sled them down and then we're gonna try to make a snowman," she told AFP. "We just try to have fun in the snow!"

In Washington DC, it was back to work for the federal government, which told civil servants -- who already had Monday off for the Martin Luther King holiday -- to stay at home on Tuesday.

Federal agencies opened two hours late and employees were also permitted to take unscheduled leave. Those that were able were allowed to work from home.

Most area schools, in the city and neighboring Maryland and Virginia, were to remain closed again Wednesday.

Chicago residential areas were still digging out Wednesday after being dumped with six to 12 inches of snow, canceling hundreds of flights and slowing trains,

an AFP reporter said.

In total, the governors of three states -- Delaware, New Jersey and New York -- declared states of emergency.

Philadelphia recorded up to 14 inches of snow on Tuesday, the National Weather Service said.

FlightAware, a website that monitors air traffic in real time, said more than 1,500 flights into, out of or within the United States had been canceled Wednesday and nearly 2,000 delayed.

National rail company Amtrak said it would operate "a modified schedule" on its Northeast Corridor line between Washington and Boston, as well as on two other routes in the hard-hit region.

New Jersey's Chris Christie, who is battling allegations that his office bullied political foes, also canceled a gala on Ellis Island in New York Harbor to mark the start of his new term.

## Ecuador's Correa wants US military to leave

QUITO (AFP) - Ecuador's leftist President Rafael Correa said Wednesday he would ask the United States to withdraw American military personnel assigned to its embassy in Quito.

Correa said he became aware of what he described as an outsized presence after learning that four US military personnel were aboard an Ecuadorian military helicopter that came under fire on October 3 last year near the border with Colombia.

"That's when we learned of all this, of the military group, nearly 50 military personnel. This is inconceivable," he told foreign reporters.

"Unfortunately, these people have been so infiltrated in

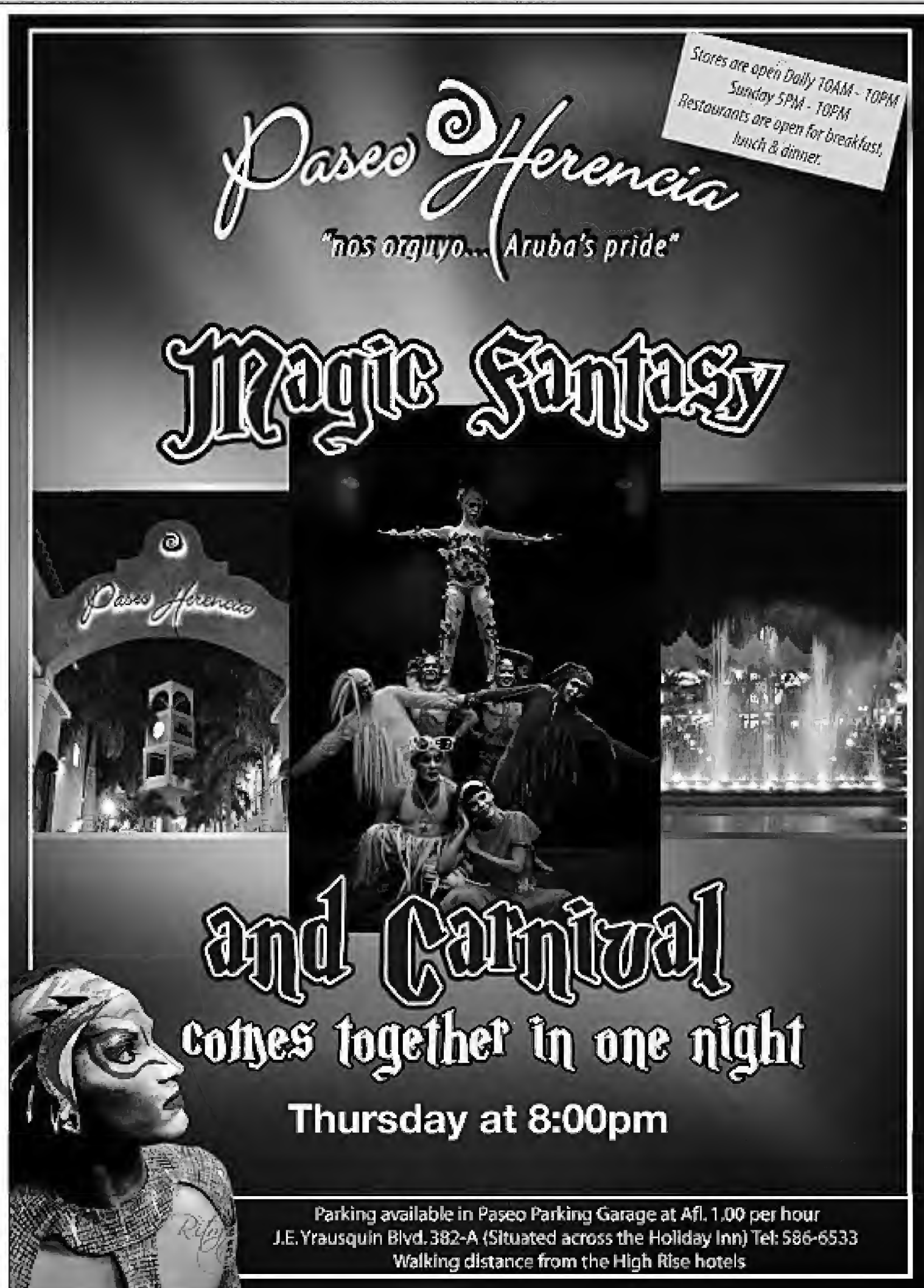
all the sectors that what is scandalous appeared normal."

Correa, an economist by training who has long railed against America's "imperialism" in its Latin American backyard, said Quito was "already taking measures" to address the issue.

US Embassy spokesman Jeffrey Weinshenker said the United States had not yet received "formal notification" of the Ecuadorian request.

He said about 20 US Defense Department employees, both military and civilian, were assigned to the embassy and were "fully accredited."

"All our activities are carried out with the explicit approval of the Ecuadorian counterparts," he said.



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## Cubans can now rent homes, commercial space

HAVANA (AFP) - For the first time in half a century, Cubans are being allowed to rent homes and commercial properties under a decision announced by the government Wednesday.

The measure allows "Cuban individuals residing in Cuba" to use "real estate leasing services offered by authorized real estate entities," according to the resolution in the Communist-run nation's Official Gazette.

It also stipulates that Cubans cannot rent properties for use as "international schools, news agencies and NGOs."

Newspaper Juventud Rebelde noted that leased property could be used for "housing, offices, shops and warehouses."

Until now, only institutions or foreign residents could rent property from real estate agencies in Cuba which are either state-owned or mixed capital ventures.

"This is great. Up until now there were people who had the money, but could not rent through a real estate agency," said Grisel Espinosa, 43, who sells T-shirts in the main handicraft fair in Old Havana.

Trinket seller Illinoi Borges, 38, said he liked the idea "that if you make a good deal, you can rent a space, even if it's small."

The rule is the latest in a series of reforms by the government of President Raul Castro that is very slowly opening the island's communist economy to limited private enterprise.

With thousands more workers privately employed, the new measure gives Cubans broader alternatives to state-provided housing and commercial space.

With a population of 11.1 million, Cuba now has some 445,000 private or "self-employed" workers, largely clustered in the service industries,

creating a growing demand for commercial property.

Newspaper Juventud Rebelde said that the move marked "new impetus and support for self-employment and other forms of non-state management," by President Raul Castro in his drive to "update" the country's exhausted Soviet-style economic model.

The resolution fixed the rate per square metre of housing at five convertible pesos (\$5) and between seven and 10 CUCs for office premises, shops or warehouses.

Such fees are prohibitive to most Cubans, in a country where the average wage is under \$20 per month.

But the change could also be aimed at making it easier for Cubans who left the country and return -- something which did not happen before travel reforms last year -- to rent pricey apartments, if they can afford them, as well as business space.



## Trading violins for guns, Mexican vigilantes take on cartel

APATZINGÁN (AFP) - Mariachi musician Efrain has traded his violin for a rifle. He wants to fight a drug cartel that killed two of his nephews. His plight is like that of many in the Mexican state of Michoacán, where vigilante groups were formed last year to take on the cartel called the Knights Templar. Efrain, 58, said his nephews were 19 and 20 years old. The family paid the ransom demanded by the drug lords, but the hostages were killed anyway. In the past Efrain had already been forced to undertake the unpleasant task of playing with his mariachi band at parties thrown at the ranches of the drug traffickers. He guards a ranch in a region called Tierra Caliente, the epicenter of violence between the vigilantes and the cartel, which engages in kidnapping, extortion and other crimes besides drug trafficking.

Sick of the years of abuse, the vigilantes rose up with the support of many farming communities in Tierra Caliente.

But they have raised eyebrows because they seem suspiciously well-funded. They drive expensive trucks and use AK-47 assault rifles. The suspicion is that they are financed by some other cartel that wants to take Knights Templar territory.

"We really do not know where their interests lie. They must be some that are linked to drug traffickers, but it is clear that they got fed up with making payoffs to the Knights Templar," said a woman in the city of Apatzingán who refused to give her name.

People in Tierra Caliente have spent months in a state of alert. They are trapped in the crossfire between the Knights Templar and the vigilantes, who have taken control in some 20 towns to try to expel the drug cartel.

Added to the mix this week were thousands of federal police and army troops sent in by President Enrique Peña Nieto to try to pacify the region. Like many other parts of Mexico it has been plagued by drug-related violence for years, but it is now the main security issue facing the president as he wages war on the cartels. The conflict has left more than 77,000 people dead in drug-related violence since 2006.



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## 'Enough is enough, time to negotiate,' UN chief tells Syrians



MONTREUX (AFP) - UN leader Ban Ki-moon told Syria's warring sides at a peace conference in Switzerland Wednesday that the time had come for negotiations to end the country's bloodshed.

"Our purpose was to send a message to the two Syrian delegations and to the Syrian people that the world wants an urgent end to the conflict," Ban said in a closing press conference at the talks held in the Swiss town of Montreux.

"Enough is enough, the time has to come to negotiate," Ban said. "Syrians must come together to save their country, protect their children and find a peaceful path."

"We must seize this fragile chance," Ban said, after Syria's regime and opposition gathered with world powers for the most serious push yet to end Syria's civil war after nearly three years.

The UN-Arab League envoy for Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, told the press conference he would meet on Thursday with both sides to discuss the next step in negotiations.

"Tomorrow I am going to meet them separately and see how best we can move forward," Brahimi said.

Syrian regime and opposition delegations have been scheduled to start talks in Geneva on Friday following the conference.

## Venezuela targets film, television in anti-violence fight

CARACAS (AFP) - President Nicolas Maduro has announced a crackdown on violence in television dramas in Venezuela, the latest in a series of measures seeking to reduce the nation's spiraling crime rate.

In a speech delivered from the presidential palace late, Maduro said he would issue a decree imposing programming changes that will allow him to "create a new culture of television and cinema" in his South American nation.

It is impossible, Maduro said, "to deny the ability to influence and the weight of television in our society," as he explained his rationale for the measures reducing the prevalence of crime and bloodshed on Venezuelans' television and movie screens.

Already last week, Maduro called for the total overhaul of the country's current television programming, saying it encourages crime.

The government said Communications Minister Delcy Rodríguez met earlier this week with officials from the audiovisual media industry to devise a television program-

ming schedule that would offer less violent content.

The television reforms are being imposed with the nation still shaken over the shooting death earlier this month of a soap opera star and her husband.

The murder put a spotlight on Venezuela's soaring crime, which has kept many Venezuelans from venturing out at night and prompted others to buy armored cars or boost security in their homes.

The couple apparently was killed during an attempted robbery.

Venezuela has one of the world's highest murder rates, with 79 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2013, according to the non-profit Venezuelan Observatory of Violence.

The interior ministry, however, has a lower murder rate of 39 homicides per 100,000.

In another anti-crime measure, Venezuela has launched a plan to take special measures in some 79 cities which account for about 80 percent of the nation's crimes.

A massive anticrime protest is planned Sunday in the Venezuelan capital.



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## UN warns of surge in Haiti cholera deaths

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) - A United Nations envoy warned Wednesday that cholera deaths in Haiti will surge and spread to other countries unless more funds are found to battle the epidemic.

More than 8,330 people have already died from cholera, that started in 2010 and many blame on UN peacekeepers based in the impoverished Caribbean nation.

But special envoy Pedro Medrano told AFP in an interview that legal wrangling over the epidemic has to be put aside in order to tackle the sweeping advance of the disease.

Medrano said cash is lacking for purification tablets, anti-biotics and staff to keep up a campaign that has cut the number of victims over the past two years.

If funds are not found before this year's rainy season starts in



May, "we will face a very dark situation."

The 65,000 new cases reported in 2013 were the lowest reported yet but still more than 550 people died, according to UN figures.

Medrano said that unless funds are found the UN estimates that the number of cases could double this year and deaths increase four fold.

"If we are not prepared to

make the investment now, we will have this year perhaps close to 180,000 cases and even up to 2,000 fatalities," he said.

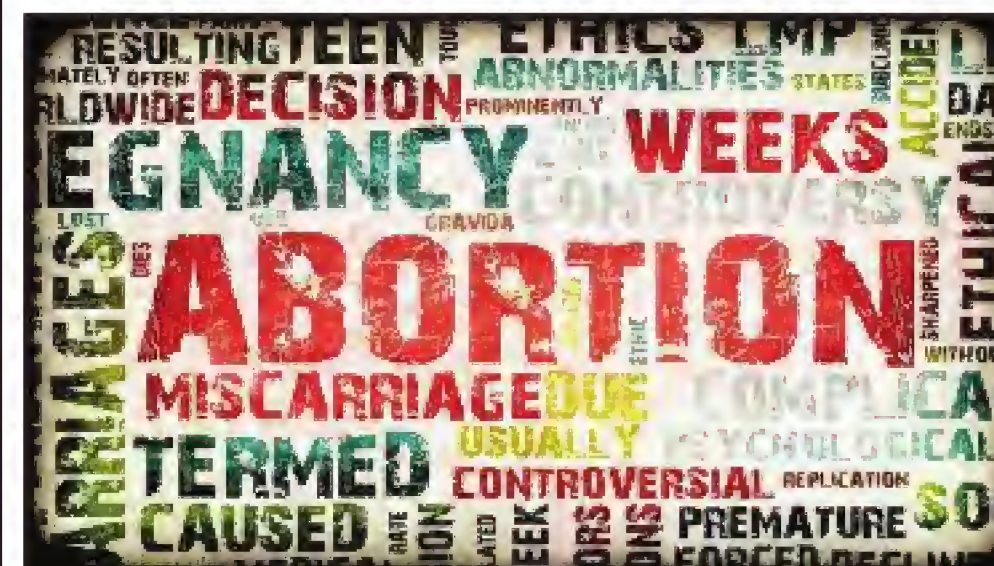
The strain of cholera, that originally came from South Asia, has already been reported in Mexico, Cuba and Dominican Republic with some deaths.

A single case of cholera in a Peruvian port in the 1990s spread to 18 South American countries and killed 10,000 people, Medrano noted.

The UN assistant secretary general, who was named to the tough post in October, called for "a Marshall Plan for water and sanitation" in Haiti, a country of 10 million people with a long history of natural disasters and political strife.

The Haitian government has reported more than 680,000 cases since the epidemic broke out in October 2010 near a UN camp where Nepalese peacekeepers were based.

## France approves bill making abortion easier



PARIS (AFP) - French lawmakers have approved a controversial abortion bill that scraps a requirement for women to prove they are in distress to legally terminate a pregnancy.

The measure approved is a part of a broader legislative package on gender equality and updates a 1975 law, named after former health minister Simone Veil who legalised abortion in her hardest political fight.

The measure -- in stark contrast to the Spanish government's recent decision to roll back a law allowing women to freely opt for abortion -- still has to be put to the vote before it passes into law.

But it has created divisions in France, which although officially secular is a deeply Catholic country. Opinion within the opposition right is also split on the issues, with

critics arguing that the new measure trivialises abortion.

The bill will allow women to obtain an abortion at up to 12 weeks into a pregnancy, and also punishes those who try to prevent a woman from going to places where she can receive information on terminating a pregnancy.

The 1975 law stipulated they could only opt for abortion if they could prove that they were in "a situation of distress".

However, the legislative battle is largely symbolic, given that France records around 220,000 abortions a year, and it is estimated that around one in three Frenchwomen undergoes the procedure in her lifetime.

The state health system began reimbursing abortion costs about a year ago.

Thousands of people protested in Paris on Sunday, on the eve of the parliamentary debate on the abortion bill.

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## Music festival asks public to compose 'Tweetfonie'

FRANKFURT (AFP) - A German music festival Wednesday invited social media users to compose all-new orchestral pieces for a "Tweetfonie" to be given a world premiere later this year.

The world of classical music is eagerly embracing Twitter and Facebook with musicians, conductors, concert halls and opera houses enthusiastic users of the platforms.

The Kurt Weill Festival is taking this new-found enthusiasm one step further and planning a "Tweetfonie" of melodies composed by music-lovers and budding composers from all over the world and submitted via Twitter.

The tunes, each limited to Twitter's requisite 140 characters, will be selected and then arranged for a symphony orchestra in the eastern city of Dessau which hosts the festival.

The results will be given their world premiere by the Anhaltische Philharmonic Orchestra Dessau under its chief conductor Antony Hermus on March 3, as part of this year's festival.

Budding Mozarts will be able to submit their melodies via a specially designed website [www.tweetfonie.de](http://www.tweetfonie.de), which goes live from February 28, with an online keyboard that converts tunes into tweet format, to then be sent on Twitter.

"The most original tweets will then be arranged for orchestra by professionals sitting at their computers somewhere in the world," the festival organisers said in a statement.

The live performances of the orchestral versions of the tweets will be viewable online.

This year's Kurt Weill Festival, dedicated to the German-Jewish composer who was born in Dessau in 1900 and died in exile in the United States in 1950, runs from February 22 until March 9.

It will include more than 50 concerts, as well as films, exhibitions and lectures, at 17 different venues.

Last year's festival attracted around 16,000 visitors to the composer's native city.

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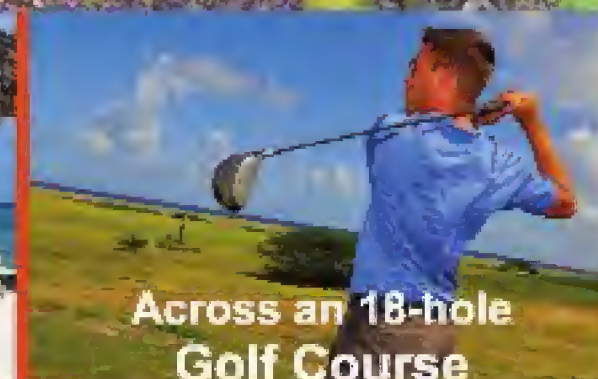
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## Annotated 'Mein Kampf' looks set for publication

BERLIN (AFP) - Germany's Bavaria state signalled it would not seek to prevent the publication of an annotated version of Adolf Hitler's manifesto "Mein Kampf" in an apparent about-face.

Amid a debate over academic freedom and a back and forth over whether to pursue the project, Bavaria indicated that it would not try to stop a historical institute from bringing out a version of the book with scholars' commentary.

But the southern state

stressed in a statement that it would seek to prevent any other full or partial publication of the 1924 book in which Hitler railed against the "Jewish peril".

Bavaria holds the rights to "Mein Kampf" (My Struggle) because Hitler was officially a resident of Munich when he died, but those rights expire at the end of 2015.

Since World War II, the state has blocked any reprints of the book but two years ago announced plans to publish in

early 2016 an annotated version for academic purposes and to help "demystify" the text.

However that seemed in doubt after the Bavarian state government changed course in a surprise move in December, insisting that the "seditious" book must stay off the market after complaints from Holocaust survivors.

Germany's Central Council of Jews has welcomed the prospect of an annotated "Mein Kampf".

Several Bavarian legislators complained over the decision to torpedo the academic edition, a project the state parliament had supported, and which had already cost 500,000 euros (\$688,000) in state funding.

Hitler started writing "Mein Kampf" in prison after his failed putsch of 1923. After his rise to power, millions of copies were published. From 1936, the Nazi state gave a copy to all newlyweds as a wedding gift.



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## New Japanese "G FLEX"



TOKYO (AFP) - Models display Japanese mobile communication giant KDDI's new smartphones "G Flex" (L), produced by South Korea's LG Electronics and Sony's "Xperia Z Ultra" (R) in Tokyo on January 22, 2014. G Flex has a six-inch curved surface OLED display and Xperia Z Ultra has the world's thinnest body of 6.5mm in thickness with a 6.4-inch LCD display.

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## Electric super bike poses problems for Dutch officials



THE HAGUE - A hybrid electric bike which is capable of speeds of up to 45 kph is causing a headache for officials in the Netherlands, the Volkskrant reports on Wednesday.

The Bluelabel Cruiser, which is made in Germany, looks like a tough mountain bike with fat wheels and straight handlebars. It costs over €3,000 and several hundred have already been sold in the Netherlands, the Volkskrant says.

But because it can go so fast, the bike should be officially categorised as a moped and limited to a maximum speed of 25 kph, the paper points out. It should also be officially registered as a vehicle, have third party insurance and blue number plates.

'But no-one does that,' Coen

Bartelds, of the Amsterdam bike and scooter shop Juizz, told the paper. Furthermore, he points out, if you are going to travel at 45 kph you should actually wear a helmet, be on the road and have a yellow number plate.

The Dutch cycling union Fietsersbond has organised a meeting on Saturday to discuss the super bike and how it should be treated in law. 'It is a good form of transport but we don't think it should be on city cycle paths and nor should mopeds,' spokesman Arien de Jong told the Volkskrant.

A spokesman for the transport ministry said the vehicle is currently classed as a bike but from 2017 will be considered a scooter under EU guidelines.

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Canada	CAD	1.77	1.79	1.84
Britain	GBP	2.80	2.85	2.99
Switzerland	CHF	191.71	192.43	197.10
Netherlands	EUR	230.59	232.69	244.05
Sweden	SEK	25.91	26.63	28.01
Denmark	DKK	30.23	30.95	32.94
Norway	NOK	30.67	31.39	29.43
Japan	JPY	214.88	216.84	172.39

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## Verizon reveals 320,000 US data queries in 2013

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Verizon on Wednesday became the first major US telecom carrier to release a "transparency report," and said it received 320,000 data queries last year in the United States alone.

Verizon also said it received between 1,000 and 2,000 "national security letters" from US officials, and had law enforcement requests in 13 other countries where it has operations.

The big telecom firm last month said it would follow the lead of big technology firms including Google, Apple and Microsoft in issuing the transparency reports.

The companies have been under scrutiny in light of revelations of wide-ranging US government surveillance programs.

AT&T also said last month it would issue a transparency report.

Verizon said its 2013 data for the United States included subpoenas, court orders, warrants and emergency requests from law enforcement.

"We do not release customer information unless authorized by law, such as a valid law enforcement demand or an appropriate request in an emergency involving the danger of death or serious physical injury," the company said in the report.

More than 164,000 of the requests were subpoenas from US law enforcement, which Verizon said compelled the company to comply.

"The subpoenas we receive are generally used by law enforcement to obtain subscriber information or the type of information that appears on a customer's phone bill," the company said.

"More than half of the subpoenas we receive seek only subscriber information; that is, those subpoenas typically require us to provide the name and address of a customer assigned a given phone number or IP address."

It also received more than 70,000 court orders signed by a US judge and 36,000 warrants which require probable cause that the data sought is linked to a crime, Verizon said.

More than 50,000 cases were emergency requests for information from law enforcement, it added.

Outside the United States, the largest number of requests came from Germany (2,996) and France (1,347), Verizon said.

The company said it did not track the percentage of cases where it provided data, but will do so in the future.

Verizon said it would reject a request in cases where a demand "is facially invalid" or "overly broad or vague."

The companies are not allowed to disclose requests from the secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, but tech firms have been pressing for permission to reveal this data.

## Bankers spar over health of markets after crisis

DAVOS (AFP) - Heavyweights in the banking world on Wednesday debated whether the financial crisis had turned a real corner, or whether the demons of the past could fast return.

"Markets are safer," said Douglas Flint, chief executive of Anglo-Asian banking giant HSBC, sitting at a roundtable debate at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

"It would be extraordinary and a shocking indictment if after six years of a crisis the system wasn't better than it was before the crisis," he said.

To Flint, much had been done since the terrifying days of the Lehman Brothers bank collapse in 2008.

He said banks today spent more time on regulatory matters than ever before and the industry showed more self

regulation than any other, save perhaps the nuclear sector.

"Regulatory matters, oversight, probably takes minimum of 50 percent of board time and more likely two-thirds of board time," he said.

But Paul Singer, head of investment firm Elliott Management was far more doubtful on the progress made since the crisis and feared that measures taken, especially by central banks, may have created as yet unknown threats.

In the past few years, central banks, led by the US Federal Reserve, have pumped unprecedented sums of cash into the world financial system without having any real understanding of how the policy could play out in the long term, he said.

"There is no telling whether

the unwinding of that policy will be moderately disruptive, not disruptive at all" or bring a "cascade" of "intense and brutal changes in the prices of stocks and bonds," he said.

Overall economic talk in Davos has shown consensus that recovery in the world economy is underway, but scars of the crisis still remain, especially doubts about the ability of governments to come to the rescue once again.

Singer argued that it was global governments who "called a halt" to the crisis by bailing out the financial system.

Hit by high debt partly brought on by the rescues, the governments this time around "may or may not" be in a position to save the world once again, he warned.

## Venezuela limits access to dollars at official rate

CARACAS (AFP) - Venezuela said Wednesday it would allow only importers of high priority goods like food to buy dollars at the official rate, forcing others to pay nearly twice as much.

Rafael Ramirez, Venezuela's vice president for economic affairs, insisted the move was not a devaluation of the national currency, the bolivar, even though it would have that effect for those who need US dollars but are not on the priority list.

"This is not a devaluation. This is a different exchange system," Ramirez said in announcing the move.

Under the new regime Venezuela will only provide dollars at the official rate of 6.3 bolivars to \$1 to importers of

designated priority goods like food and medical supplies.

Others who need dollars to pay overseas bills will have to buy them at government-run auctions, where \$1 costs an average 1 of 1.3 bolivars.

Venezuelans seeking dollars for travel, remittances abroad or non-priority imports will have to buy them at auction market, Ramirez said.

"Here the big issue is, do we give dollars to travelers or to bring in food? Do we give dollars to speculators or do we bring in goods that are essential to our industry?" he said.

Venezuela has been plagued with widespread shortages of staples and other goods under its system of strict currency controls.

That in turn has helped fuel inflation, which is running at 56 percent a year.

But critics say corruption has flourished under the system, as those with access to dollars at the official rate sell them in the black market where the rate now hovers at 60 bolivars to the dollar.

Amid pressures for a devaluation, President Nicolas Maduro has vowed to keep the official rate in place.

Ramirez, who is also president of the state-oil company that generates 96 percent of the country's foreign revenues, said that in 2014 the government plans to exchange \$42 billion worth of bolivars, \$11.4 billion of it through the government-run secondary market.

**YESTERDAY'S Crossword Answer**

E	G	G	I	N	D	I	C	E
T	R	E	O	U	R	S	O	D
C	E	N	T	U	R	N	A	G
H	A	I	R	S	O	F	T	L
E	S	A	U	E	U	R		
R	E	L	A	Y	T	O	T	A
		N	I	P	S	A	T	E
B	A	S	T	E	R	T	R	O
I	R	K	L	A	N	S	I	N
L	E	I	D	Y	E	F	E	E
L	A	P	S	S	A	F	O	R

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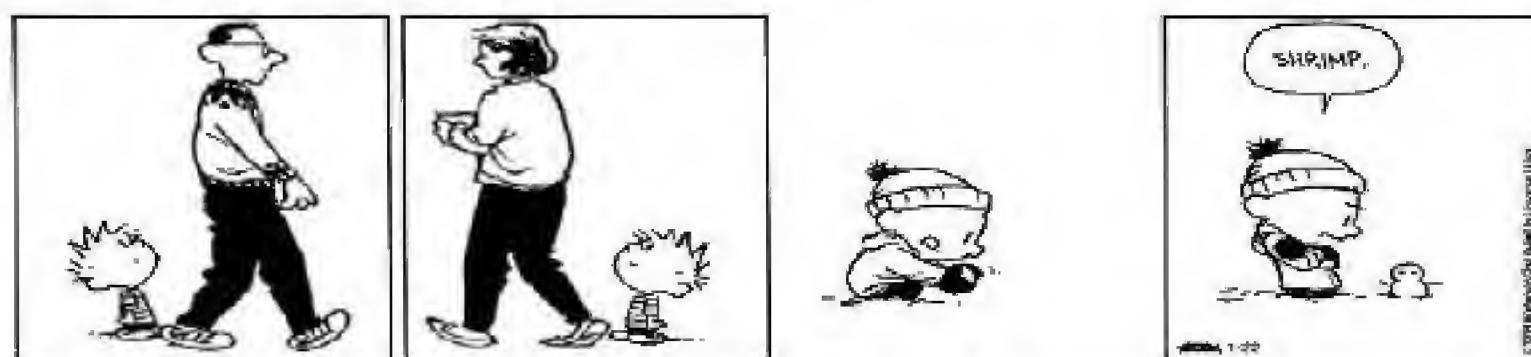
## PICKLES



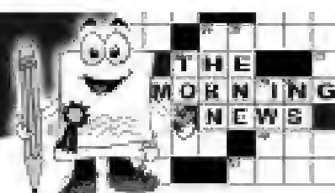
## MOMMA



## CALVIN and HOBBS



## CROSSWORD



## CROSSWORD

## ACROSS

- 1 Whiter  
6 Fitting  
9 Promote  
12 — jacket ('60s style)  
13 One way or another  
14 "Here — again!" (2 wds.)  
15 Conjunction, informally  
16 Berate noisily (2 wds.)  
18 Went down  
20 Primps  
21 Chicken perch  
23 Printed cotton cloth  
26 Canned meat brand  
30 Degraded  
31 Physicians' gp.  
32 Not Dem. or Rep.  
33 Changed  
36 Sister or cousin

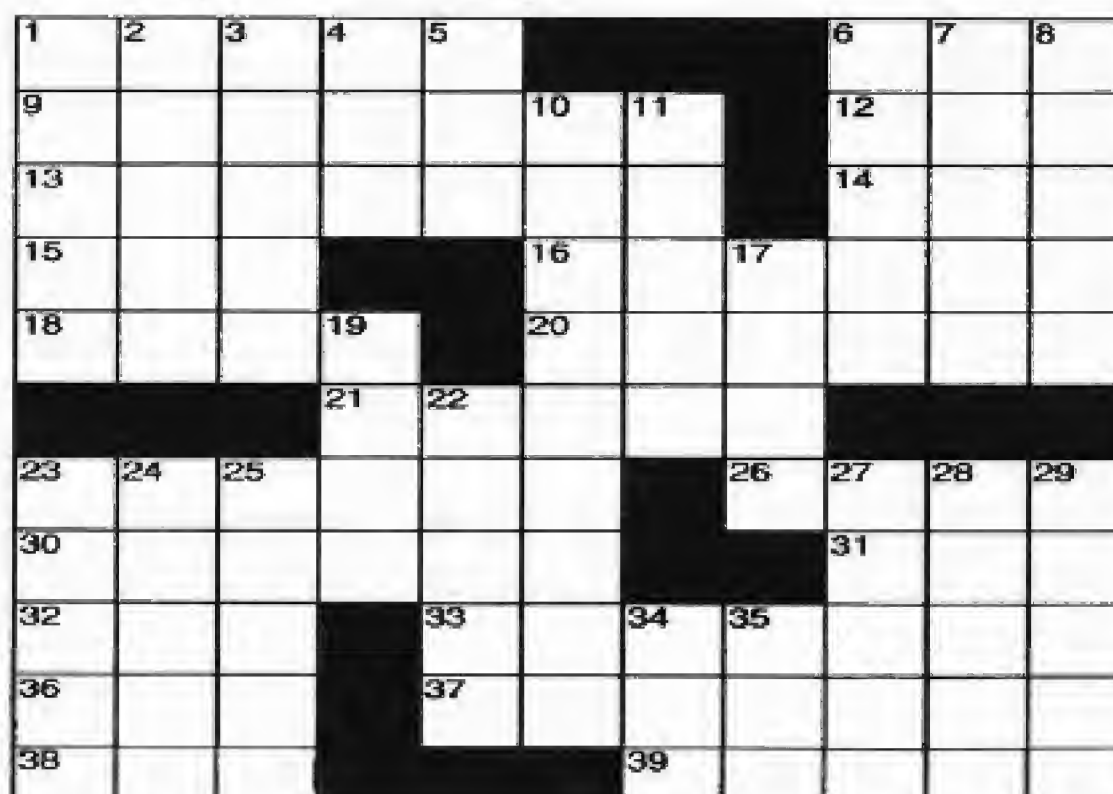
- 37 Close to  
38 Lode load  
39 Politician Jackson

## DOWN

- 1 Annoyances  
2 Hawaii's "hello"  
3 Detroit dud  
4 Abel's mom  
5 Cheer sound  
6 A miss is as good as — (2 wds.)

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- 7 Believing in many gods  
8 Whistle sounds  
10 Lap dog (2 wds.)  
11 Water jugs  
17 Sanctions  
19 Singer Kristoferson  
22 Scuba diver's locale  
23 Egyptian city  
24 "Li'l" Dogpatch fellow  
25 Serving spoon  
27 Plaster of —  
28 Hymn closings  
29 Commercial manicurist  
34 — Mahal  
35 Poetic "before"



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# Sudoku



SOLUTION

2	8	8	2	1	5	1	9	6
2	9	1	8	8	9	1	2	8
7	6	9	1	6	2	2	8	5
6	2	9	6	9	1	8	7	2
8	1	7	6	2	2	8	5	9
5	9	2	5	8	7	6	1	2
9	7	8	2	1	6	9	2	8
9	8	2	7	2	8	5	6	1
1	2	6	9	5	9	2	6	7

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9  
A number is Never repeated in a row or column.  
In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9



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Mama Luisa hard at work in the kitchen

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The "hipper" and elegant new digs offer beautiful views, but Mama Luisa's magical touch in the kitchen is what

first won this charming eatery their loyal clientele. She can be counted on to be conjuring up the delicious dishes that have been in her family for generations. As Varella says, "My mom loves and lives to cook. Even when she is not at work in the restaurant, she is experimenting with new dishes all day at home."

She is the Queen of the Kitchen."

Be sure to try Luisa's acclaimed "Carni Stoba di Ma-

machi" - "Grandma's Beef Stew," or their fresh, whole snapper, with Mama Luisa's delectable salsa criollo. Don't miss the specialty of the house, a favorite local delicacy, Keshi Yena - "Filled Cheese." This is a tasty, filling stew of chicken, with other ingredients that are handy that day, all incased in a thick skin of melted Gouda. It is satisfying and particularly memorable. Regional side dishes and some of Mama's secret recipe prepara-

tion of banana hasa and creamy potatoes provide a deliciously picturesque meal.

The Queen's is located on the second level of Palm Beach Plaza, tucked into a cozy corner at the front of the mall. If you have a mind to try the real deal in Aruban food, without a doubt, this is the way to go, reasonably priced and easily accessible. A full menu can be seen on their website, <http://www.thequeensaruba.com/>.

queensaruba.com/.

Aside from an extensive regular menu they also have daily specials made from whatever is in season, and Mama Luisa is in the mood to prepare, so don't be shy about asking for something that may not be on the menu, as they are always eager to please.

The Queen's is open daily from 3:00 pm - 11:00 pm, offering both indoor and outdoor dining.



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## Tennis: All-Swiss final? Don't jinx it, says Federer



MELBOURNE (AFP) - Roger Federer Wednesday said he didn't even dare to think about setting up an all-Swiss Australian Open final after he joined compatriot and close friend Stanislas Wawrinka in the semis.

Federer said he was first-

pumping and high-fiving with his wife, Mirka, during Wawrinka's epic five-set win over defending champion Novak Djokovic, which earned him a first Grand Slam semi-final.

But he said he couldn't even contemplate playing his friend

for the trophy ahead of the semi-finals, where he will face Rafael Nadal and Wawrinka is playing Tomas Berdych.

"The moment you start thinking about that we're taking the same flight home," he said.

"Look, I'm worried about my match clearly, but I'll definitely watch his first. Hopefully he can make it. Then he can put the pressure on me that way."

Federer, who beat Andy Murray to reach the semi-finals, admitted he wasn't "sitting there all quiet" during Wawrinka's win over Djokovic late on Tuesday.

"At the end I was standing up, hands in the air like him (Wawrinka)," he said. Wawrinka will play Berdych on today, a day before Federer's showdown with Nadal.

## Football: PSG suffer Cup shock, Falcao hurt in Monaco win

PARIS (AFP) - Paris Saint-Germain were surprisingly beaten 2-1 by Montpellier in the round of 32 of the French Cup on Wednesday, while an injury to star striker Radamel Falcao overshadowed Monaco's win against minnows Chasselay.

Unbeaten at home since November 2012 and flying high at the top of Ligue 1, PSG were expected to see off a struggling Montpellier side at the Parc des Princes. However, the visitors have improved recently under coach Roland Courbis and took the lead 20 minutes in when Daniel Congre headed in a Siaka Tiene cross. The injury to the 60 million-euro (£50.4m, \$82.5m) striker also stole the headlines from tiny Corsican club L'Ile-Rousse, of the fifth division, who stunned the holders Bordeaux. In a game played in Ajaccio because their own ground was not deemed suitable for the tie, L'Ile-Rousse held out at 0-0 for 120 minutes before winning 4-3 in a penalty shoot-out. There was considerable drama on Tuesday too as Marseille lost 5-4 at home to south-coast rivals Nice while three other Ligue 1 sides -- AC Ajaccio, Sochaux and SC Bastia -- all lost to second-tier opponents. As a result, only seven Ligue 1 clubs will enter the draw for the last 16 of the competition.



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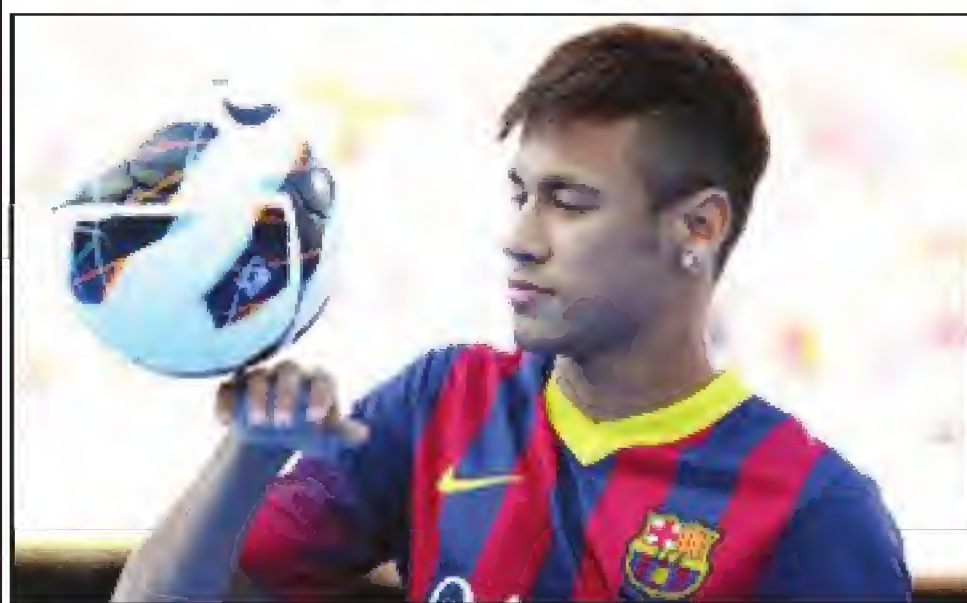
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## Spanish judge hears case over Neymar deal:



MADRID (AFP) - A Spanish judge Wednesday agreed to hear a case lodged against Barcelona president Sandro Rosell over the signing of Brazilian striker Neymar. Judge Pablo Ruz of the National Court in Madrid issued a ruling accepting the case but adding that there was no "urgency or necessity" to hear Rosell's testimony at this stage. Barcelona have maintained since the signing was made last May that the whole operation cost the club 57.1 million euros (\$77 million), but that they couldn't divulge how much each of the parties involved in the deal had received on confidentiality grounds. That led to a member of the fan-owned club, Jordi Cases, lodging a complaint last month against Rosell alleging misappropriation because members did not know the "real destination" of 40 million euros supposedly paid to Neymar family business N&N. Ruz subsequently demanded Barca hand over the contracts involved in the deal, as well as the club's financial accounts for the past three years. And he said the contents of the complaint and documents received from Barcelona provided "sufficient elements" for the case to proceed. He ordered a commission of inquiry to travel to Brazil to obtain a copy of the 21-year-old Neymar's contract with former club Santos and for the contracts lodged with football's governing body FIFA to be released. The judge also instructed Neymar to submit a contract he had signed with N&N ceding future financial rights. Reports in Spain have estimated that the total cost of the transfer could be well in excess of the figure claimed by the club. Ruz also ordered the club to hand over the documentation on a 7.9 million euro deal agreed for the Catalans to have first-option to buy three Santos youth team players and an agreement for the two clubs to play two friendlies for which Barca would pay the Brazilians nine million euros. At a press conference on Monday, Rosell reiterated that the total cost of the transfer was 57.1 million euros and said he would welcome the opportunity to be called to give evidence to clarify matters. However, the judge said there was no "urgency or necessity" to hear Rosell's testimony until the preliminary inquiry was more advanced.







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## Prosecutor calls for Ribery, Benzema sex case to be dropped

PARIS (AFP) - A prosecutor in Paris on Wednesday called for the case against French football stars Franck Ribery and Karim Benzema, accused of having sex with an underage prostitute, to be dropped "pure and simple".

Jean-Julien Xavier-Rolai explained to the court in the French capital that it was impossible for the prosecution to prove that the two footballers knew that Zahia Dehar was under the age of 18 when they allegedly paid for sex with her.

Although the age of consent is 15 in France, paying for sex with anyone under 18 is a crime but Dehar, who later gained fame as a lingerie model and designer, had lied about her age, the court heard.

News of the investigation into Bayern Munich winger Ribery, now 30, and Real Madrid striker Benzema, 26, broke just before France's disastrous 2010 World Cup campaign.

Ribery has admitted having sex with Dehar after she was flown to Munich in 2009 as a "present" for his 26th birthday, but insists he could not have known she was not 18 at the time.

Benzema, who is accused of paying for sex with Dehar in a Paris hotel when she was 16, denies that any encounter took place.

The charges against the duo carry possible prison sentences of three years plus a fine of 45,000 euros (\$61,000).

None of Dehar, Benzema or Ribery have attended the hearing, which opened on Monday.

## Baseball: Yankees sign Tanaka to seven-year deal

NEW YORK (AFP) - Masahiro Tanaka, the Japanese pitcher who went unbeaten last season, signed a seven-year Major League Baseball deal worth \$155 million with the New York Yankees on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old right-hander, whose contract is the major leagues' highest for an Asian-born player, went 24-0 with a 1.27 earned-run average and 183 strikeouts with only 32 walks in 212 innings for the Japan Series champion Rakuten Eagles.

The Yankees spent another \$20 million in a posting fee to

the Eagles to obtain Tanaka, who was sought by several US clubs and considered the best pitcher available by most teams.

Tanaka, who reportedly has an opt-out clause after four years in the contract, spent seven seasons with Rakuten, debuting at age 18 and going 99-35 with a 2.30 earned-run average in 175 games while striking out 1,238 batters over 1,315 innings.

His deal ranks as the fifth-highest for a pitcher in Major League Baseball history, trailing the seven-year deals for Clayton Kershaw of the Los

Angeles Dodgers at \$215 million, Detroit's Justin Verlander at \$180 million, Seattle's Felix Hernandez at \$175 and his new Yankee teammate, C.C. Sabathia, at \$161 million.

Tanaka fills out a Yankee starting rotation that includes Japan's Hiroki Kuroda, Dominican Ivan Nova and Sabathia.

The Yankees and other major league clubs were faced with a Friday deadline to reach a deal with Tanaka or see him return to Japan for another season.

With the signing, the Yankees figure to soar well beyond the \$189 million in salaries they had hoped to spend for their 2014 campaign.

The Yankees won only 85 games last season, finishing in third place in the American League East division, but have added free agents Carlos Beltran and Jacoby Ellsbury to the lineup in the off-season and with Tanaka have bolstered their pitching to return to contention for a playoff spot.

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## Olympics: US cautious on Russian security

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The White House stopped short of expressing full confidence in Russia's Olympics security operation on Wednesday following a call between presidents Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin.

The leaders discussed how to ensure next month's Winter Games in the Black Sea resort of Sochi are "safe and secure," as well as US offers of security assistance, in a call on Tuesday.

At a White House briefing, spokesman Jay Carney said that there was "concern" in Washington about an uptick in reporting of threats by Islamic extremists relating to the Sochi Games.

He said the United States would send diplomatic security and FBI agents who would liaise with Russian security officials to protect American athletes and spectators.

But he did not take several opportunities offered by journalists to express full confidence in Russia's preparations, amid growing concern in

Washington -- and claims by some lawmakers -- that Moscow is not taking advantage of US offers of assistance.

At the State Department, spokeswoman Marie Harf deflected a query as to whether Washington had full confidence in the Russian effort, but added that Washington knew Moscow was "committed to doing everything they can in terms of security."

The careful public tone adopted by the administration could signal a desire to avoid offending or antagonizing Russia in the run-up to the Games while concerns are expressed privately with top Russian officials.

The call between Putin and Obama came amid signs of subtle but rising pressure on Russia over securing the Games from Washington.

Islamist insurgents based in North Caucasus republics such as Dagestan who are seeking their own independent state have vowed to disrupt the Sochi Games in an effort to undermine Putin.

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